

The Manchester Journal.

NUMBER 26.

MANCHESTER, VERMONT, THURSDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 21, 1909.

VOLUME XLIX.

The Manchester Journal

Published every Thursday Morning.

OTTO H. DENNETT, Ed. and Prop'r.
MANCHESTER, VERMONT.

TERMS: \$1.00 per Annum.
To subscribers in Bennington County,
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MANCHESTER CENTER, VERMONT

The Lure of the Mask

By HAROLD MAC GRATH

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CHAPTER XI.

A BOX OF CIGARS.

ON the way up to Rome Hillard

and his pupil had a second

class compartment all to

themselves. The train was a

fast one, for the day of slow travel

has passed in Italy, and the cry of

speed is heard over the land.

There was a change of cars at Rome

and a wait of two hours.

After luncheon Hillard secretly

bought two boxes of cigars to carry

along. They were good cigars and cost

him \$15. He covered them with some

newspapers and at the station succeed-

ed by some ledgerman in slipping

them into one of his cases. Hillard

would have lectured him on his ex-

travagance, and this was a good way

to avoid it. But some hours later he

was going to be very sorry that he

had not made a confidant of his guide.

As they were leaving the train the

noticed two gentlemen getting into the

forward compartment of the carriage.

"Humph! Our friend with the scar,"

said Hillard. "We do not seem able to

shake him."

"I'd like to shake him. He goes

against the grain somehow." Merri-

thew swung into the compartment. "I

wonder why the Sandfords dropped

him?"

"For some good reason. They are a

liberal pair, and if our friend offend-

ed them it must have been some-

thing outside the pale of forgiveness.

But I should like to know where old

Giovanni is. I miss him."

"Poor devil!" said Merriew, with

careless sympathy.

The train started.

"Monte Carlo! Gold, gold, little

round pieces of gold!" Merriew rub-

bed his hands like a miser.

"Hard to get and heavy to hold!"

quoted Hillard. "I suppose that you

have a system already worked out."

"Of course. I shall win if I stick to

it."

"Or if the money lasts. Bury your

system, my boy. It will do you no

good. Trust to luck only. Monte Car-

lo is the graveyard of systems."

"But maybe my system is the one.

You can't tell till I have tried it."

Soon the train began to lift into the

mountains, the beautiful Apennines.

By the time they arrived in Genoa,

late at night, both compared favorably

with the coolers in the harbor of Na-

ples.

Early the next morning the adven-

ture set out for Monte Carlo—more

tunnels; a compartment filled with

women and children. But the beauty

of the Riviera was compensation.

Ventimiglia, or Vintimille, has a sin-

gular sound in the ears of the traveler

if perchance he be a man fond of the

tobacco. The train drew in. A dozen

steps more and one was virtually in

France. But there is generally a slight

hitch before one takes the aforemen-

tioned French customs. A porter

popped his head into the window.

"Eight minutes for examination of

luggage!" he cried.

"Come, Dan," cried Hillard; "lively if

we want good seats when we come

out. We change trains."

After a short skirmish they located

their belongings. They would have to

be patient.

Among the inspectors at Ventimiglia

is a small, wizened Frenchman with a

face as cold and impassive as the sand

blown sphinx. He possesses, among

other accomplishments, a nose pecu-

liar for its shape than for its smell.

He can "smell out" tobacco as a witch

doctor in Zululand smells out a "devil."

Fate directed this individual toward

the Americans. Hillard knew him of

old, and he never forgot a face, this

wizened little man.

"Monsieur has nothing to declare?"

he asked.

Hillard made a negative sign and

opened his cases. With scarce a

glance at their contents and waving

aside the coupons the inspector ap-

plied the chalk and turned to Mer-

riew.

"Monsieur has nothing to declare?"

he repeated.

Merriew shook his head airily.

"Monsieur, monsieur!" he said in his best

Italian. He did not understand what

the inspector said. He merely had

suspensions.

"Look!" suddenly exclaimed Hillard.

"Passing out of the door which led to

liberty and to France, their luggage

guaranteed by cabalistic chalk marks.